



## VERITABLE VEGETABLE

Promoting sustainable agriculture  
since 1974

### Banana Trivia

■ **Bananarama** are an English girl group who had several hit pop and new wave songs in the 1980's.

■ Best **ripening temperatures** for bananas are between 65 and 75 degrees fahrenheit.

■ A **bunch of bananas** is called a hand, and each banana is a finger.

■ After harvesting, the **banana plant** must be cut down. A new stalk (called a daughter) will grow out of the base of the plant.

■ **Banana Yoshimoto** is the pen name of Mahoko Yoshimoto, a Japanese contemporary novelist.

■ It is said that rubbing the inside of a **banana skin** on a mosquito bite will alleviate the itching.

■ In Veritable Vegetable's **banana room** there is a plaque which reads, "Over 25% of human genes are the same as those of a banana. Get over yourself."

- Dani Yamamoto

### GROW Bananas!

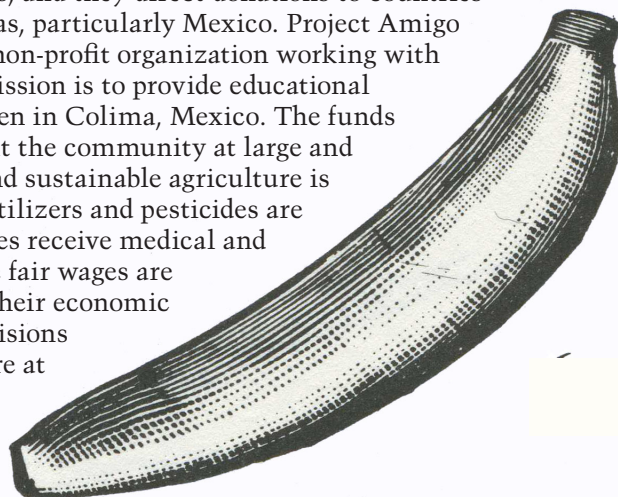
In 1876, at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, the first imported bananas were individually wrapped in foil and sold for 10 cents. These days, bananas are the number one fruit sold in the US; individual annual consumption is estimated at 28 pounds. In 2004, the world banana industry exported 15.9 million tons, and Ecuador, Costa Rica, the Philippines and Colombia accounted for 63% of total world exports. Do the math because that's a lot of bananas!

United Fruit is generally credited with starting the banana trade as we know it, but not without employing controversial tactics to quell worker and government uprisings along the way. In its formative stages, the banana industry ravaged ecosystems, destroyed natural habitats, and mono cropped a single banana variety with disastrous consequences. Organically-grown bananas impact the environment considerably less, but conventional farming yields six times more fruit; this underscores the difficulties in converting conventional producers to organic practices.

Organic bananas used to arrive in wooden crates at VV, and seasoned staff tell stories of problematic, heavy boxes. Even 10 years ago, we did not have a temperature-controlled room for bananas; they lived in an elaborate tent and tarp construction with an electric fan, with barely enough room for a person to stand up straight! Fortunately, times have changed, technology has improved, and VV now owns a special banana room with temperature control.

Many growers are doing more to improve their business practices, and you may have noticed changes to Organics Unlimited banana packaging which now have the word 'GROW' adorning their boxes. GROW stands for Giving Resources and Opportunities to Workers, and is a non-profit foundation established in 2004. Organics Unlimited, an organic grower of tropical fruit for four generations, instituted the GROW program to help smaller farmers and their families succeed. The GROW Foundation aims to improve working conditions for field workers, while providing funds that benefit workers directly.

The GROW program works by adding a premium of \$0.60 per box of bananas, which Organics Unlimited then releases to an organization called the International Community Foundation (ICF). The ICF partners with GROW and other donors, and they direct donations to countries in Asia and the Americas, particularly Mexico. Project Amigo ([projectamigo.org](http://projectamigo.org)), is a non-profit organization working with GROW funds, whose mission is to provide educational opportunities for children in Colima, Mexico. The funds from GROW also benefit the community at large and their land: as organic and sustainable agriculture is supported, chemical fertilizers and pesticides are discouraged, and families receive medical and dental benefits. Because fair wages are paid, workers improve their economic standing, and make decisions with community welfare at the forefront.



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As the banana buyer for Veritable Vegetable, I am thrilled to connect the GROW program with our customers. I spoke with Mayra Velazquez de Leon, president of Organics Unlimited, and asked her which aspect of the GROW program she is most proud of. She replied emphatically that the most touching result of the GROW program are the letters she receives every month from children, who benefit from Project Amigo's development of education centers. Through Project Amigo, homework clubs which provide computers, teachers, and a small library, operate in close proximity to farms in rural Colima. Mayra animatedly describes the success of the GROW program, and she is delighted with how quickly the money makes its way to needy communities. Mayra believes the 60-cent premium is easily absorbed by distributors and retail consumers, as the per-pound price increase per forty pound box is one and a half cents; what's more, it supports an effortless process to donate small sums which incrementally amount to a lot of money in Mexico.

You can find more detailed information about Organics Unlimited and the GROW foundation on the web at [organicsunlimited.com](http://organicsunlimited.com), and follow the link to GROW. Additionally, the International Community Funds web address is [icfdn.org](http://icfdn.org), where Organics Unlimited is mentioned in the partners link.

- Denise Mc Allan

## Denise's Banana Flambé for Two

The term *flambé* is a French word meaning "flamed" or "flaming". To *flambé* means to ignite a food that has liquor or liqueur added.

Use an 80-proof liquor or liqueur. Liquors that are higher proof are too volatile when lit.

Also, be extremely careful when lighting! Carefully light the fumes at the edge of the pan, and do not lean over the pan when lighting.

Finally, keep the lid of the pan handy, in case the flames get a bit too high. If this happens, cover the pan immediately and the flames will die down.

Warnings aside, here are the instructions:

### Ingredients:

2 bananas  
1 TBS butter  
2 TBS sugar  
1/2 cup rum

### Procedure:

Quarter two bananas. Add a knob of butter (about 1 TBS) to a pan and heat butter on medium.

When butter is hot but not sizzling, add bananas to the pan, cut sides down. Cook bananas for a few minutes until they start to brown just slightly.

Sprinkle 2 TBS sugar over bananas. Once the sugar has melted and bananas are browned, add about 1/2 cup rum. Let mixture sizzle for 10 seconds.

With a long match, carefully light the vapors of the alcohol at the edge of the pan. The alcohol evaporates quickly, leaving the rich flavor of the rum behind.

### To Serve:

Ladle the warm, caramelized bananas into dishes and serve with vanilla ice cream and chocolate sauce.

## Market Update

Mexican **melon supply** is going to start within the next two weeks. Expect a nice mix of varieties: Ambrosia, Galia, Charantais, Del Mel and watermelons.

**Navels** are winding down. **California Valencias** are starting up.

Check out the **Osuna Little Fingers eggplant!** This is a Japanese-style eggplant. Globe eggplant is in light supply.

The **zucchini supply** from Mexico and California is plentiful. It's a great time to buy zucchini!

In **apples**, there are still some domestic Red Delicious, Gold Delicious, and Granny Smiths. We also have imported Galas, Grannies, and Fujis.

English hothouse **cucumbers** will be light for a few weeks, but Japanese cucumbers and slicers are in good supply.

Supply of green and colored **bell peppers** will be light throughout May due to cold weather trends in the desert growing region.

**Peaches** from Mexico have started!

The **stonefruit crop** from California is expected to start with aprium by the end of the first week of May.

**Local organic California cherries** are expected May 21... stay tuned!

